



One Hundred First Legislature - First Session - 2009
Introducer's Statement of Intent
LB 489

Chairperson: Tim Gay
Committee: Health and Human Services
Date of Hearing: February 19, 2009

The following constitutes the reasons for this bill and the purposes which are sought to be accomplished thereby:

LB 489 would statutorily recognize Area Health Education Centers (AHECs) as a resource for connecting Nebraska students to health careers, health professionals to communities, and communities to better health.

In Nebraska, there are significant gaps between the health care workforce demand and the actual supply, particularly in underserved and rural areas. Nebraska also has inequities in access to and the quality of health care services in underserved and rural areas.

AHECs provide direct support to underserved and rural areas and as a result have a direct impact on increasing the health care workforce supply (e.g., physicians, physician assistants, nurses, dentists, behavioral and mental health providers, and other public health professionals) and on decreasing the inequities in access and quality of health care services.

There are five (5) independent Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) originally organized under the auspices of the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) which provide services to all 93 counties in Nebraska.

There are four (4) rural AHECs with offices located in Grand Island, Norfolk, Scottsbluff, and Beatrice. There is one (1) urban office located in Omaha. Nebraska AHECs focus on the following areas:

- Health Career Promotion (Kindergarten – College)
- Health Professions Development and Student Services
- Continuing Education
- Special Community Needs

LB 489 would maintain the current relationship between the AHECs and UNMC and ensure that the AHECs continue to foster networking and collaboration among communities and community-based health care providers, continue to serve those communities with a demonstrated need for health professionals, and address the health care workforce needs of the communities served.

LB 489 also provides performance outcomes that will measure AHECs effectiveness at developing workforce, training and education that support Nebraska's health infrastructure, particularly in underserved and rural areas.

Principal Introducer:

Senator Kate Sullivan